

Welcoming of Both Sons Third Week of Lent Saturday, March 18, 2017 8:15 AM
Mi 7:14-15, 18-20; **Lk 15:1-3, 11-32** (St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop and Doctor of the Church) (It's actually a very poignant and sad story of the lack of responsiveness of human beings.)

The story of the prodigal son is many people's favorite. I know a nun that used to tell me how she really liked this story; unfortunately she didn't understand it, and many people don't. It's really a two-edged sword. **It's actually a very poignant and sad story of the lack of responsiveness of human beings.** It is a theme found throughout the Old Testament. The prophets often talk about the hardness of heart of people, the ingratitude of people.

Now this portrays **two different sons, both of whom are totally ungrateful.** One wishes the father dead. "Give me my share of the property," that's saying I wish you were dead already; and he goes and dissipates the property. The second son, always his nose to the grind stone, but no more affection, no more love than the other. **Both are heartless.** Even when the prodigal son returns, **he never actually expresses sorrow.** There is no sorrow here. There's an acknowledgment of wrong doing—that's different from sorrow. He is not sorry; he is hungry. But nonetheless **the father receives him, embraces his, and promotes a grand celebration. Is this reconciliation? We do not know.** Luke tells the story in such a way we don't know what the son really is thinking or feeling. All we know is he came back because he was hungry. He never expresses true sorrow. He only acknowledges that objectively he did something wrong.

The older son is no worse, no better: hard of heart, undesirous of being with the father. He said, "You never gave me a kid to share with my friends," who are somebody else, not you. **Yet the father is welcoming to both, accepting of both, unrepentant as they are, unloving as they are.** And Jesus tells the story to **those people who always kept their nose to the grindstone, the Pharisees and the scribes,** because they were complaining that Jesus was so welcoming to sinners and he was so willing to be their companion at table.